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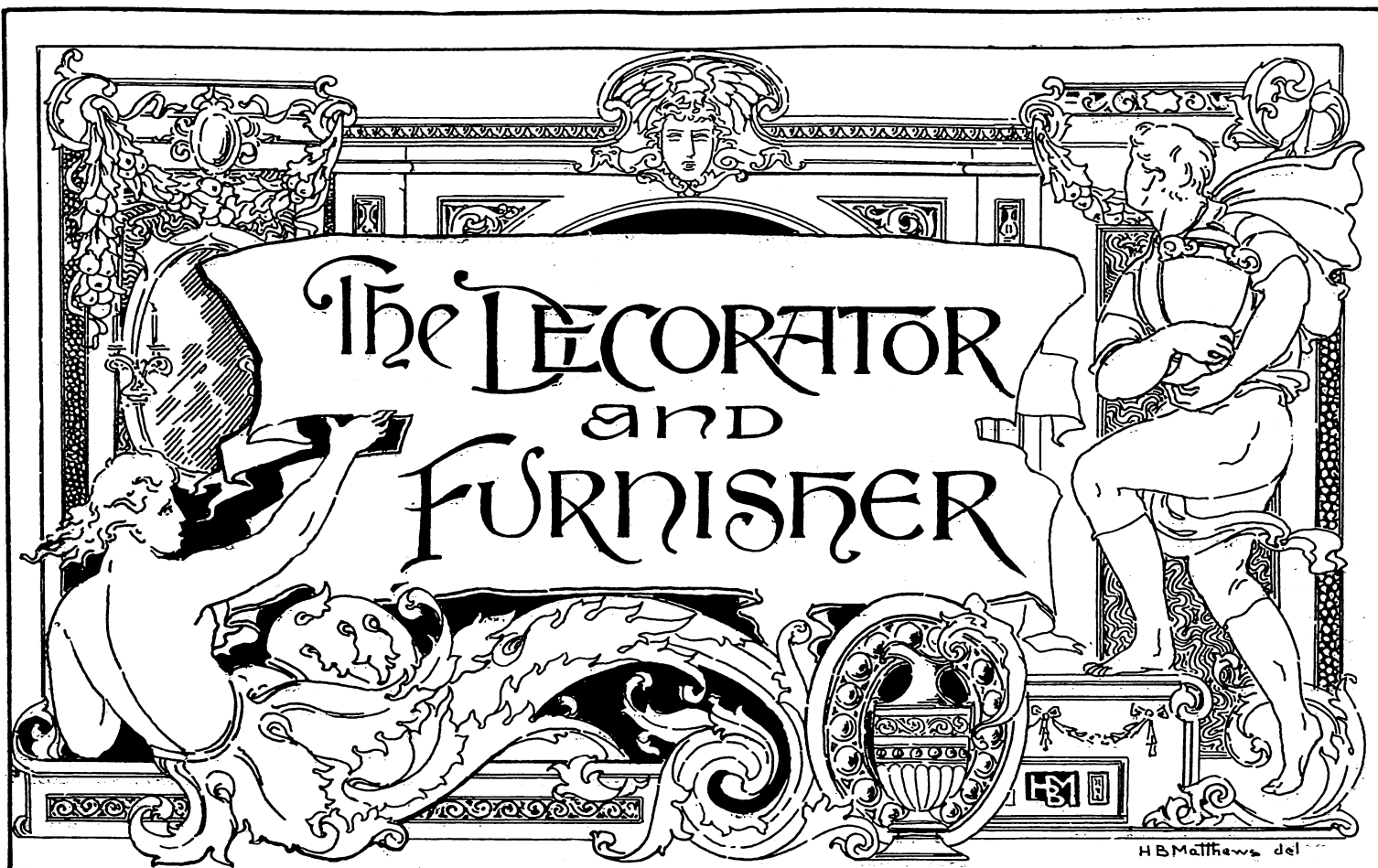
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VOL. XXI.—No. 3.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER, 1892.

Per Annum, Four Dollars.
Single Copies, 35 Cents.

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Entered at New York Post Office as Second Class Mail Matter.

The Decorator and Furnisher.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT

150 Nassau Street, New York, by

THE ART-TRADES PUBLISHING AND PRINTING CO.,

W. M. HALSTED, President.

W. R. BRADSHAW, EDITOR.

W. P. WHEELER, MANAGER.

Subscription \$4 per year, in advance

(PATENT BINDER, \$1.00 EXTRA.)

Single Copies, - - - 35 Cents.

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WE would like to see a library panelled nearly to the full height of the walls, with broad and comfortable seats arranged under the bookshelves on either side the fire, the fire-opening and hearth laid with small tiles of a complimentary color enriching the woodwork, which should be painted ivory white, the floor-covering, frieze and ceiling, being in tones of color in harmony with the tiles.

IN practical decoration it may be laid down as a principle that one color should dominate, and that this dominant color should be either a primary or secondary, and that the other colors must be subsidiary to it. In most cases, the most perfect and beautiful harmony is produced by employing neutral tints for the larger masses, and then giving lightness and beauty to the whole by the introduction of small masses in the primary or secondary colors, that may form a proper contrast to the prevailing color. It must be remembered, that the eye is seldom satisfied with any arrangement of color unless all of the primaries are present in some shape or other.

AN amateur critic in house decoration remarks that "the modern drawing-room is essentially uncomfortable; there is no reason for such a room being a staring mass of white and gold with great windows everywhere, and not a particle of shadow anywhere, the poor fragments of such a thing being hunted out carefully by mirrors at every point, causing distraction and confusion to eye and brain." He seems to forget that the modern drawing-room is not a place of repose, but is the abode of brilliancy, excitement and beauty. It is a room set apart for evening use, where people meet in gayly-colored costumes, to converse, or listen to music, or dance, and everything should be bright and cheerful and splendid, without a trace of shadow anywhere.

FASHION in furniture, like fashion in dress, is perpetually changed; but perpetual change, whether it be justifiable or not, is not perpetual progress. Fashion is a wheel that turns round and round. After a fashion has been discarded we only require a little patience to wait long enough until we get it all back again, landing us in a total negation of progress, and with a strong tendency to the substitution of mere caprice and

mere display for real progress in beauty. Amid the eccentricities and novelties just now in popular repute in furniture, it is possible that certain true and tried constructional forms may survive the wreck of fashions, and bring us near the consummation of a distinctively western style, but at the present moment very few signs of such a consummation are observable. The furniture manufacturer will continue to produce eccentric novelties if he finds the trade demands it, and on the other hand, will fashion goods to satisfy the taste of those who cling to traditional forms, and will not tolerate startling innovations.

BOOKS are in themselves decorative objects and radiate an influence superior to that of rugs, draperies and bric-a-brac. Some books, like the County History, resplendent in gold and morocco, are simply made to sell, and are nothing more than table decorations, but the books that move the world are embalmed human life, and exhale a fragrance of friendship and love, bestowing a nameless distinction on the apartment they glorify. What more cosy than to sit by a bright fire on a winter's night, in the ease of slippers, surrounded by rows of books in book cases, like friends that never weary of our presence nor we of theirs.

THE celebration of Luther's four hundredth birthday, October 31, 1883, in Wittenberg, included the consecration of the newly-restored Schlosskirche, on the door of which, 375 years ago, Luther had affixed his famous ninety-five theses. The original church was completed in 1499, but was all but completely destroyed in the war of 1760. A new building was erected in 1770, which was again destroyed in the war of 1813. A thorough restoration of the historic pile was begun by the Crown Prince Frederick, in 1885, and finished in the present year. The tower is now raised to 288 feet instead of 100 feet, and its upper part adorned with a splendid frieze in a mosaic of yellow letters on blue, bearing the inscription, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," ("A strong tower is our God.") The church is now a very handsome one. The altar, in late Gothic style, is particularly beautiful, and all the windows are adorned with stained glass of great artistic merit in design and execution.

THERE are amongst us nature worshippers who adore rusticity, who assume that a copy of nature is not only art but the highest form of art. These are opposed by the other extremists, who declare that all art must be conventional, that the accepted types of decorative art cannot be improved upon, and that to go on copying them is the end and aim of all decorative design. Both are wrong—while nature is ever the fount of beauty and the model for all design—it requires aptitude, training and experience to adapt the forms of nature to the given position and purpose for which the ornament is required, and this adaptation is conventionality. To study nature is not enough—the artist must also study how artists of all times have interpreted nature, treating the natural form differently, according to the nature of the material decorated. But to adapt the ready-made conventions of others, no matter how beautiful, is to say that the tombs of buried people are the heaven-sent habitations for living men. Each artist must do his own conventionalizing before there is any chance of success.

Decoration is a study both of nature and the nature of the material to be decorated, hence the different modifications necessary for wood, stone, glass, metal, textile fabric, earthenware or enamel. It is the happy blending of nature and art that is valuable in proportion as it is a fresh development from within outwards, and not a slavish copy of the dead past.

ONE of the characteristic features of the decorative art of the present time is the determined reaching after elegance of contour, softness of line and the desire to do away, as much as possible, with the conventionality and stiffness which, for a time, has been found to prevail in most of the fashionable styles in woodwork and furniture. Anything more stiff, ungainly, hard, mathematical and bristling with sharp corners than the

style known as the German Renaissance, it would be impossible to conceive. Cabinet chairs, fittings of all kinds seem to be cast in a common mould, or turned out by machine. Machinery plays the most important part in the manufacture of such articles, to the death of anything like sentiment or grace. The Louis Quinze style in furnishings, whatever objections may be urged against its eccentricities, has certainly performed a great work in influencing a return to furniture having softness and elegance of outline. There is a decided feeling after Hogarth's line of beauty in all of the decorative appointments. Those Louis Quinze features which are most free from Coquillage and constructive ornament exhibit a subtle grace and gentleness of line which will charm the luxury-loving furnisher, and as considerable fancy is again evidenced for this style it becomes the duty of our manufacturers, if they have not the strength of mind and talent to show the public something better, to select the easy lines of the Louis Quinze style as a substitute for that boxy and painfully square character possessed by too much of the furniture made in the past.

The same ease of movement extends to window draperies, and the progress made in this direction of late years has raised the embellishment of the window to a much higher position than it formerly held. The conventionally straight and stiffly hung valance, with its brass cornice of years ago, has now disappeared in favor of the more artistic and gracefully arranged curtain folds now in fashion. A nicely draped window must necessarily give an additional charm to the outlook, to which it stands in the same relation as the frame does to a picture, and therefore, an appropriate and effective treatment of the window is a matter of primary importance.

THE dress of Americans and of North Europeans is oftener of a hue than it is of black or of white, but nevertheless it cannot be said that we apply color to dress. For color, technically speaking, means a mingling of pure hues which enrich each other, and form, by their effect upon each other of contrast and relation, an agreeable and harmonious whole. Of the art of thus combining colors, we have neither a knowledge nor an inherited instinct. How many men in a thousand can say, for example, what is the effect of mingling a light tone of a dark color with a dark tone of a light color? or know in what proportions of area the primaries balance each other? or even know what the complementaries are? And yet these are the mere alphabet of the subject.

We know so little about color that we can't tell a harmony from a discord, and our eyes are so unused to it that a bit of pure tone like an Italian woman's neckerchief in a costume fairly frightens us, as red does a turkey. If we venture to indulge the inclination for color which we all have by nature, we are more likely than not to produce a crude motley. The best educated of us, therefore, take refuge in negation, following in this particular at least, Molière's counsel to leave dress to the tailor, while the ignorant flaunt crudities and bring color into disrepute. We have taught ourselves to believe that color is not desirable. We think we don't like it; we say that it is not refined.

This is of course nonsense. Nature's colors of sky and landscape cannot be surpassed for splendor; art uses color pure; and the most beautiful fabrics and garments in the world are such largely because of splendid color. The most gorgeous hues royalty has in all ages appropriated to its own costume, and who shall say that the purple of Rome and the colors of the sun of the Chinese Emperor are vulgar? No, super-refinement is not the reason we eschew color in our dress, and it would be a contradiction of terms to say that it is an excuse for our uncertain taste.

Some people attribute our disinclination for color to the cloudy skies of the North, but, though we may have inherited a tendency from this cause, it is hardly operative in America, where nature is as brilliant as anywhere in the world. Goethe suggests that it may be due to weakness of sight, but this will not explain our ignorance of harmonies. Our Puritan ancestry is partly responsible. Our good and great forefathers regarded with complaisance little that did not lie in the moral sphere. Color is purely æsthetic, hence they would have none of it.

The most active influence deterring us from the study of color is undoubtedly fashion. We take our cues from Northwest Europe, which knows little more of color than we, and therefore color is not fashionable.